

10 ELSEY ROAD

A HISTORY



Dr Jeska Rees, Kitchen Table Historians

DECEMBER 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABORIGINAL CUSTODIANSHIP IN RESERVOIR 3

EUROPEAN HISTORY OF RESERVOIR 5

ELSEY ROAD, RESERVOIR 7

HUMANS OF ELSEY ROAD10

OWNERSHIP OF 10 ELSEY ROAD11

OF FURTHER INTEREST13

POSTSCRIPT: SHOPS AT ELSEY ROAD15

REFERENCES17

ABORIGINAL CUSTODIANSHIP IN RESERVOIR

Prior to British invasion the land around Reservoir was under the custodianship of the Wurundjeri-willam people. Wurrundjeri-willam means place (*willam*) of the grubs (*jeri*) of the White Gum Tree (*wurrun*). The Wurundjeri-willam people were one of five groups who shared language similarities and kin, collectively known as the Kulin nation.



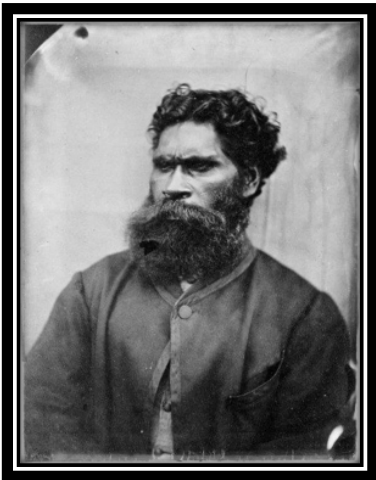
Above: map of Kulin Nation boundaries. Source: Gary Presland, Aboriginal Melbourne.

Traditional life for the Wurundjeri-willam was that of hunter-foragers, centred around the creeks and rivers, and moving according to season. The Merri Creek (*merri* meaning 'rocky') and the Darebin Creek provided fresh water, fish and birdlife while the surrounding sandy grasslands were home to possums, emu and kangaroo for hunting. Hand-made goods included woven baskets, stone tools made from local quarries such as that now known as Mount Cooper, and wooden containers. Cultural systems of

kinship governed marriage and family; laws were understood and enforced through traditional knowledge based on the land, sometimes known as the Dreaming.

When John Batman arrived from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in 1835 to try to secure a sale of Aboriginal land, he negotiated with eight *ngurungaeta* (elders) including Billibellary, representing the Wurundjeri. Although this attempt to negotiate treaty was declared void by the British government – and most likely not fully comprehended by the *ngurungaeta*, given their lack of formal land ownership system – it remains the only time that the invaders recognised Aboriginal sovereignty.

The imposition of British colonial rule in Melbourne resulted in the widespread destruction of Aboriginal customs and way of life, as the land was seized for grazing, diseases were introduced and British violence saw the retreat of the Wurundjeri-willam from their traditional lands.



Billibellary's descendants continued to be recognized as Wurundjeri leaders until the start of the twentieth century. Today the recognized traditional custodians are the Wurundjeri-Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Corporation, who provide education on and management of their cultural heritage.

William Barak, last recognized leader of the Wurundjeri-willam, 1866. Source: Wurundjeri-Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Management Corporation.

EUROPEAN HISTORY OF RESERVOIR

The whole area now known as Reservoir was 'sold' by the British government at one of Melbourne's earliest Crown land sales on 12 September 1838 (McIlroy, p.98). Robert Campbell purchased Allotment 14 in the Parish of Keelbundora, where 10 Elsey Road is now located, for 8s 6d an acre, or 375 pounds, 9 shillings and sixpence. Because of its distance from Melbourne, it was leased for grazing.



Original Rose Shamrock and Thistle Hotel built 1854.

Source: Carroll and Rule, Preston: An illustrated history, 1985

Over time European settlers began to build homes – and pubs – and what became Edwardes Lake was a focal point from the 1890s. It was donated by the Edwardes family to the Preston City Council in 1911 on the condition that it be reserved for public use.

Current day Reservoir takes its name from the three service reservoirs that were built in the area in the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to supply the growing city of Melbourne with clean water. However, the area was not referred to as Reservoir until the end of the 1920s. Before that it was considered part of Preston, and it shared the same development history as Preston - as a district of dairy farms, market gardens and flower gardens, supplying the Melbourne market well into the twentieth century.

A key component of Reservoir's growth was the development and opening of an electrified railway, which ran as far as the station called Preston (Reservoir) – now simply Reservoir – from July 1921.



Land sale advertisement, 1923.

Source: Darebin Libraries.

Reservoir then experienced two key periods of suburban expansion. The first was in the 1920s when Reservoir saw a post-WWI boom in the central area along High Street and the railway station, where a small shopping strip took shape and the first suburban housing development occurred along Edwardes Street. It was in this era that Elsey Road was created and subdivided into residential lots.

After a pause in activity during the 1930s depression and the Second World War, Reservoir's second major period of urban

expansion began in the late 1940s, when most of the remaining farmland was converted into housing estates, including some large Housing Commission of Victoria estates in the east and north.

By the twenty-first century Reservoir had become a sought-after suburb for families as housing prices increased across Melbourne. Today, the area has ten primary schools and two high schools and has seen recent investment in a new railway station complex. It is home to a diverse, multi-lingual community, with 72% of Reservoir residents having at least one parent born overseas. In terms of housing, 6% of residents are in social housing, 28% own their home outright, 30% are paying off a mortgage and 36% are renting privately. Reservoir is part of the federal electorate of Cooper – one of the few electorates to majority vote 'Yes' to the 2023 constitutional referendum on the Aboriginal Voice to Parliament.

ELSEY ROAD, RESERVOIR

Elsey Road lies in an area of Reservoir that was farmland until well into the twentieth century. The road itself is visible on the 1945 aerial map to the right, an unsealed track between structures at what is now 97 Cheddar Road, and 13 Elsey Road.

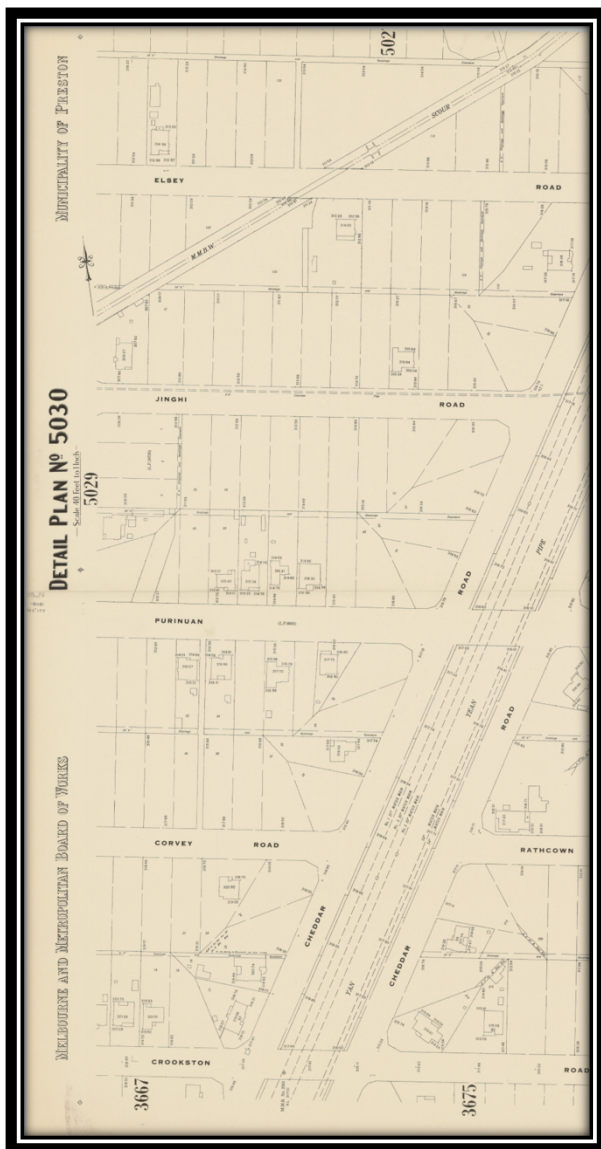
The Sands and McDougall Directory for the same year reports only one ratepayer on the north side of Elsey Road, George W. Leek, later assigned no. 24.



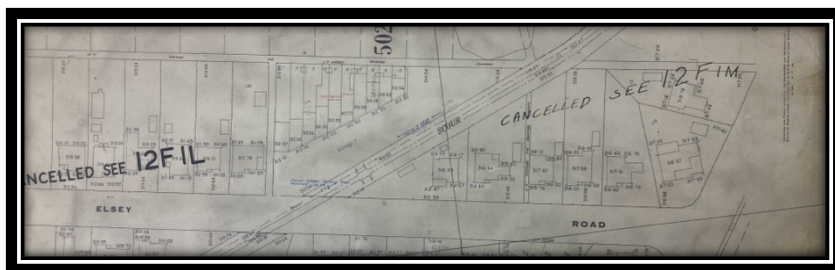
The future no. 10 Elsey Road, shown as  *Source: 1945.melbourne*

Five years later in 1950, the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) surveyed the area (right). The map recorded a similar number of houses, but the roads had been improved and Corvey Road had appeared to the south. The map also shows that Elsey Road was bound halfway along by a scour pipe managed by MMBW; such pipes are used to flush out contaminated water from the supply system and the pipe may have been visible at street level.

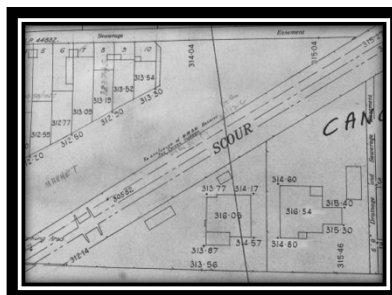
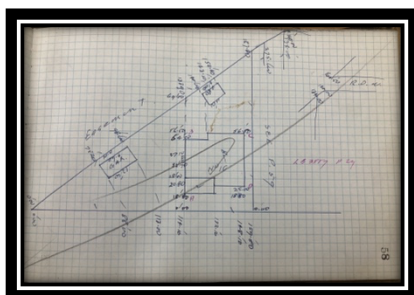
Right: MMBW Detail Map 5030, 1950.
Source: State Library of Victoria.



The MMBW map was then updated to document the multiple small houses built on the north side of the street (below). The map notes that the MMBW scour pipe has been 're-enclosed', suggesting it has been covered.



The new map shows that a house had been built at 10 Elsey Road – the same one that stands today. These revisions were made in 1960, indicating that the house was completed between 1950 and 1960.



Left: hand-drawn survey sketches of 10 Elsey Road, 1960. Right and above: MMBW maps incorporating the sketches, undated.

HUMANS OF ELSEY ROAD

The mid-century owners of the new Elsey Road houses were working people, including a carpenter, a technician, a tram employee, a textile worker (George Leek), an engineer, a clerk, a public servant and a driver. Not all of these people will have occupied their houses, but it can be assumed that Elsey Road, with its four- and five-roomed houses of brick or wood, offered an affordable way to own a home or investment property.

Two for Trial After Shooting

John Eric Twist, 28, of Park Street, North Carlton, and Reginald Arthur Keith Walker, 26, of Elsey Road, Reservoir, in Collingwood court yesterday were committed for trial on a charge of wounding with intent to murder Mrs. Nancy Jean Lowe, 32.

Each was allowed bail of £400 in a similar surety.

Police allege Twist and Walker called at a house in Emma Street, Collingwood, about 2.15 a.m. on August 29 and shot Mrs. Lowe.

Last Monday, Mr. Horan, S.M., adjourned hearing of the case until yesterday at the request of Mr. F. Gaibally (for Twist and Walker), who said he wished to call further evidence.

Earlier, Leonard Patrick Flynn, driver, of Smith Street, Clifton Hill, with whom it was said Mrs. Lowe was living at the time of the shooting, said he had been

responsible for the shooting and that Twist and Walker had not been present at the time.

Mrs. Lowe also denied having been shot by Twist and Walker.

No Appearance

When the hearing was resumed yesterday, Twist, who is standing trial in General Sessions on another charge, did not appear.

Mr. Gaibally said that in view of Twist's absence he would not call further evidence.

Mr. Gaibally asked Mr. Horan to give "serious consideration to much conflicting evidence."

Mr. Gaibally said: "The only two eye witnesses, Flynn and Mrs. Lowe, have given evidence that they are quite certain neither Twist or Walker were present at the time or had anything to do with the shooting."

Sudden Death from Meningitis

WONTHAGGI, Thursday.—Cheryl Moresco, 2, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. K. Moresco, of Cameron Street, Wonthaggi, died of meningitis within two hours of admission to hospital.

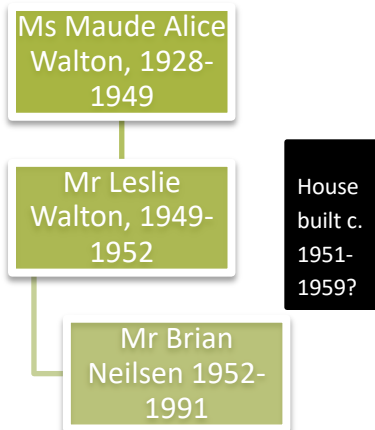
Elsey Road only appears once in a search of newspapers: reporting the arrest of Reginald Walker, resident of the street, in September 1953 for an alleged shooting. Both the shooting victim and Walker's co-accused denied that he was involved, and no further mention of the case is found after the first day's court hearing, suggesting perhaps that the matter was dismissed.

The Age, 9th October 1953.

Source: Trove.

OWNERSHIP OF 10 ELSEY ROAD

10 Elsey Road has had seven owners since 1928, shown below. [Information redacted for privacy reasons]



Maude Alice Walton

The earliest title deed for the property was in the name of Maude Alice Walton, Spinster, in 1928. Ms Walton purchased the land as part of the 1920s property boom when land was rapidly subdivided in the hopes of profiting from an increasing post-World War I population.

CANCELLED

No. 5448 Vol. 1089406
VICTORIA.

Certificate of Title,
UNDER THE "TRANSFER OF LAND ACT 1916."

Name Alice Walton of Foster Street Appendale Spinster is -
now the proprietor of an Estate in Two single, subject to the Encumbrances notified hereunder in All that piece of Land, delineated and coloured red on the map in the margin being Lot 118 on Plan of Subdivision No. 8890 lodged in the Office of Titles and being part of Crown Portion Fourteen Parish of Kaelbundora County of Bourke -----

Dated the Tenth day of September One thousand nine hundred and twenty-eight.
J. J. Storrer
Assistant Registrar of Titles
ENCUMBRANCES REFERRED TO IN THIS COVENANT contained in Instrument of Transfer No. 1382043 in the Register Book that the above-described land may not be used for quarrying or brickmaking operations nor may any marl stone earth clay gravel or sand be dug carried away or removed therefrom ----

Not to be dealt with outside the Titles Office.

ORIGINAL CERTIFICATE.

The following diagram shows the location of the land referred to in this Certificate:

[Diagram showing land parcels and boundaries]

Due to its distance from transport and other amenities, the land remained undeveloped for more than twenty years. Preston Council charged a small rates fee of three shillings and nine pence annually from 1935 to 1946.

12

all the way down the street. This may indicate that houses were built on each block in 1951, increasing property values. At no. 10 rates increased from 1/3s/4d to 2/18s/4d, and Leslie Walton sold the property not long afterward.

Brian Neilsen

Brian Neilsen, 'Driver', purchased No. 10-12 Elsey Road from the Walton family on the 19th of June 1952. It is possible that he purchased the property as land – the rate card that covers the period states that the property is 'land' until at least 1953 – or, as discussed above, a house may have been built in 1951 and Mr Neilsen purchased this along with land. Certainly by 1955, a 'no. 10 Elsey Avenue' was recorded in the Sands and MacDougall Business Directory, with Brian Neilsen's name alongside it.

Mr Neilsen continued to own the property until July 1991, although there is no evidence that he lived there.

[Information redacted for privacy reasons]

OF FURTHER INTEREST

Questions remain unanswered about 10 Elsey Road. Chief among these are its inhabitants: we know whose name was on the title to the property, but we do not always know who occupied it over the 60-plus years of the house's existence. People have lived, laughed and loved there; it has been an important place for generations of people. But it is difficult to trace individuals through history – especially if they were law-abiding.

Then there is the question of when the house at 10 Elsey Road was built. Rates records usually hold clues as to the changing value of properties, and the doubling of rates in 1951/52 in Elsey Road was initially thought to have indicated the addition of houses in those years. However, other facts

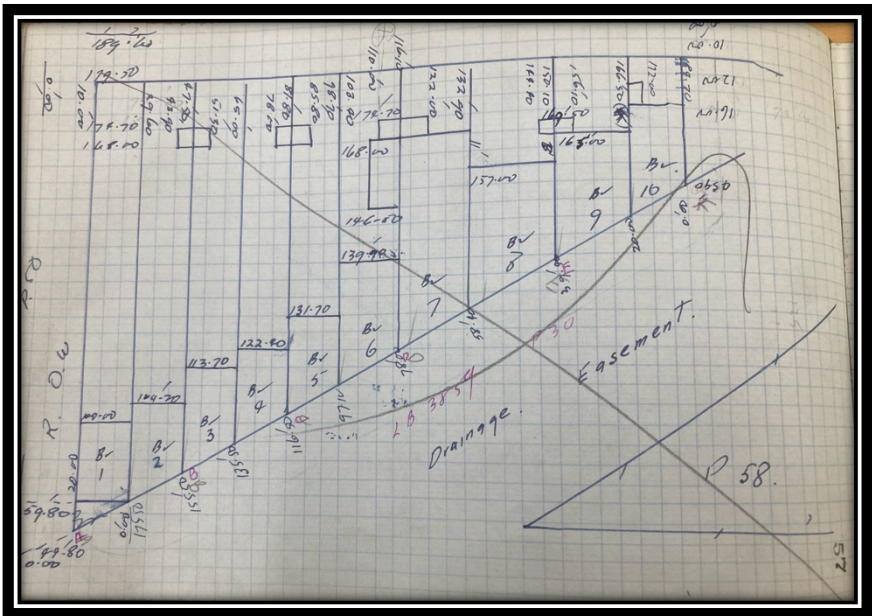
contradict this. The rate card for no. 10 was not updated to indicate a house had been built in 1951 or 1952; and the house at no. 10 was not mapped until 1960 by the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works, despite other revisions being made to the relevant map in 1953. It is therefore possible that the house was built later in the decade. Rates records for the period of 1953-1961 could not be located, so property values could not be used as a clue during that time.

Nor has this report has delved into the value of the property over time. The transition of Reservoir from farmland in the 1920s, to being a new development for workers in the 1950s, through to the sought-after city suburb that it is today, could be readily traced through the prices paid for each successive sale of for 10-12 Elsey Road, and could be the subject of future research.

POSTSCRIPT: SHOPS AT ELSEY ROAD

In 1965 the Sands and McDougall Business Directory listed multiple shops at no. 12 Elsey Road including a drapers, fruiterers, grocers and fishmongers, suggesting that the property also had commercial life during the 1960s.

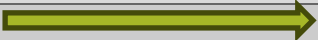








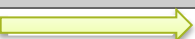




However, it seems likely that this was human error and that these shops were actually situated on Market Court; they had been sketched there by surveyors in 1960, five years earlier (below).



MMBW Field Notebook 3862, 1960, p. 57. Source: Public Records Office of Victoria

This sketch was, like that of the house at 10 Elsey Road, incorporated into the updated MMBW map on page 9 of this document.

Some of the shop-owners remained at Market Court for several years. RC Anderson's butchery is recorded first in 1965 and then every year until 1974, when the Sands and McDougall directories ceased production. Several other businesses operated at the site for at least five years until 1974.

<i>Business</i>	1965	1970	1974
<i>RC Anderson, Butcher</i>			
<i>AJ Hill, Green Grocer</i>			
<i>Browns Grocery</i>			
<i>J Bonnico, Fishmonger</i>			
<i>Wendy Joy, Draper</i>			
<i>GR Burns, Confectioner</i>			
<i>Suzanne's Beauty Salon</i>			
<i>Hajjar Family Milk Bar</i>			
<i>Noord Foodland</i>			
<i>Sillery Electric</i>			
<i>Richinda, Drapers</i>			
<i>Linards, HD</i>			
<i>Jeffreys Snappy Dry Cleaners</i>			
<i>Seidel Print</i>			

REFERENCES

NEWSPAPERS

The Age, Friday 9th October 1953, p. 4.

COUNCIL RECORDS

City of Preston Rate Card, 1935-1952, no. 13033. PROV 08221/P0001; Unit 000023.

City of Preston Evaluation Register, 1967.

PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE OF VICTORIA (PROV)

Current land title: Volume 10575 Folio 770

Previous land title: Volume 5448, Folio 406

Instrument of transfer: PS435572B

BOOKS

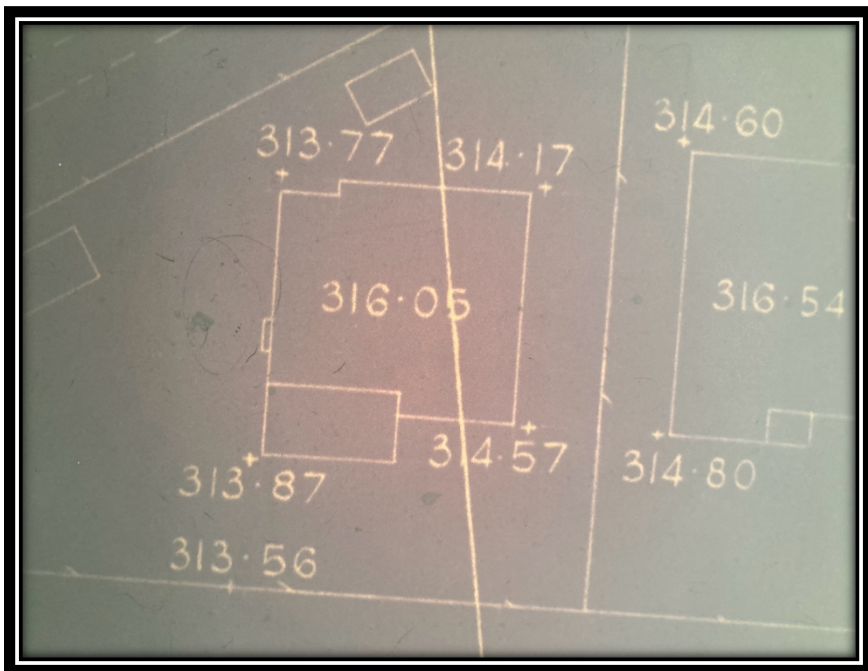
Ellender, I. and Christiansen, P., *People of the Merri Merri: the Wurundjeri of the colonial days*, Merri Creek Management Committee, 2001.

Carroll, B. and Rule, I. *Preston: an illustrated history*, City of Preston, 1985.

MAPS

Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works Detail plan 5070, 1 inch to 40 feet. PROV 8601/P0004 5070.

Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works field notebooks 3301, 3434 and 3672.



MMBW Detail Plan 5070 with 1960 updates, microfiche edition. Source: Public Records Office of Victoria.

SIDE STREET 13033 CITY OF PRESTON. 12634 ASSESS. No. 11883
 Melbourne North Province. RATE AND VALUATION CARD CENTRAL WARD
 Electoral District of Heidelberg. Preston Division.

No. 1014	STREET ELSEY RD.	SIDE NORTH	ALLOT. No. 118	AREA 160'	Land
OWNER	ADDRESS		DATE OF CHANGE		
WATSON, Miss Maud Alice 340 Brunswick St., Newmarket, N. 10. 21/6/51. NEILSON, Bryan. (Driver) 30 Horne St., BRUNSWICK EAST. N10. 21/6/51.					
OCCUPIER			OCCUPATION		
REF. TO STREETS SANITARY PAVING SUNDRY ACCOUNTS AGENT VALUATION NOTICE 10 DEC 1935 6 JAN 1937 5 DEC 1937 12 DEC 1938 4 DEC 1939 7 JAN 1941 6 JAN 1942 RATE NOTICE 24 JAN 1945 6 JAN 1987 16 DEC 1937 12 DEC 1938 4 DEC 1939 7 JAN 1941 6 JAN 1942 FINAL NOTICE 24 JAN 1945 4 JAN 1943 18 DEC 1943 4 DEC 1939 7 JAN 1941 6 JAN 1942 CERTIFICATE ISSUED No. 278 20/5/52. 4 JAN 1943 18 DEC 1943 16 JAN 1946					
INTEREST DEBIT		DEBITS IN BLACK		CREDITS IN RED	
		CURRENT	ARREARS	INTEREST	
		3 9			3 9
		3 9			88877
		3 9			1935-6
		3 9			1936-7
		3 9			2249
		3 9			1937-8
		3 9			50627
		3 9			1938-9
		3 9			10775
		3 9			1939-40
		3 9			25898
		3 9			1940-1
		3 9			97221
					OVER...
REMARKS					

P. Where a name is shown in the column "Occupier" that person is the person entitled to be enrolled. The letters "o.o." in the space set aside for "Occupier" signifies that the Owner is the Occupier. The letter "L" against the Occupier's name signifies "Lessee" or "Assignee". The information last shown under the "Occupier" herein shall be deemed to be the latest as required to be included in the form of Valuation and form of Rate under "Local Government Act 1928" for the year in question.

This report was compiled using publicly available information from the Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), the State Library of Victoria, Landata, and Victoria Unearthed.

While every effort has been made to provide a complete history of 10 Elsey Road, some gaps remain. These have been noted throughout the document and summarized at the end under 'Of further interest'.